

May 17, 2020

“Practicing Justice”
Lesson 3 of Unit

Jeremiah 21:8-14

Intro

Have you ever made a poor decision that caused some misfortune (or even disaster)? Probably. One good thing that can come out of those experiences is some life lessons we can put into place “the next time”.

That's essentially what's happening in today's lesson. Judah has disobeyed God so much and for so long that now it's reckoning time. Misfortune and disaster are coming, and there's no way to avoid it.

There are the words of God through His prophet Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Zephaniah, both of them speaking to the nation prior to the Babylonian captivity.

Prior to today's verses (vs.1-7), King Zedekiah has sent two people to ask Jeremiah to go to God for help in turning back the Babylonians. Instead, Jeremiah tells them that God will fight against His own people, and will allow the Babylonians to take the city and give them the king and all the people.

Read Jeremiah 21:8-14

1. In vs. 8, what two choices does God give the people to choose from? What actions of the people will show which choice they have made?
2. Read Deut. 30:15 and Matt. 7:13-14. What connections do you find between these verses and vs. 8? What do these verses tell us about God?
3. Verse 9 is the specific outcome to the general one in verse 8. What would the people in the city think of this pronouncement? Why? How does vs. 9 compare in idea/concept to Matt. 16:25?
4. In vs. 10, what is God's intention choosing to “do harm” to the city rather than saving it?

5. How is what is happening to Judah here in vs. 8-10 part of God's promised result to His people (read "Deut. 4:25-28)?"

6. Verses 11-12 are directed to "the (royal) house of the king of Judah". What is the basic principle God commands from His leaders? How often is this action supposed to be carried out? What specific things might fall under this directive? What are the consequences of not meeting God's standard here?

7. In vs. 13-14, what physical elements of Jerusalem's setting seem to give the people overconfidence? What does God quote them saying/thinking that shows overconfidence?

8. In layman's language, what does the phrase in vs. 14, "the fruit of your deeds", mean? Why does this "fruit" incite God to punish? How do we reconcile God's actions here with 1 John 4:8?

Application: Today's lesson is a sobering reminder that we can get overconfident in our own ways and circumstances, and fail to trust God. Jerusalem was beyond the point of repentance in these verses; people can sometimes get to the same place.

Thankfully, we can learn from Scripture and history. Romans 11:22 says, "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God." We see Him being both stern with His wayward people, and yet kind by offering them a chance at life if they will make the correct choice. We are always in the same circumstance: listening to God and repenting while there's still time, or neglecting Him until He has no choice but to apply discipline and correction.

Prayer: Father God, we pray to continually hear your voice and your Spirit's guidance in and for our lives. Help us to choose daily to accept and obey your leading. In Jesus' name, Amen.